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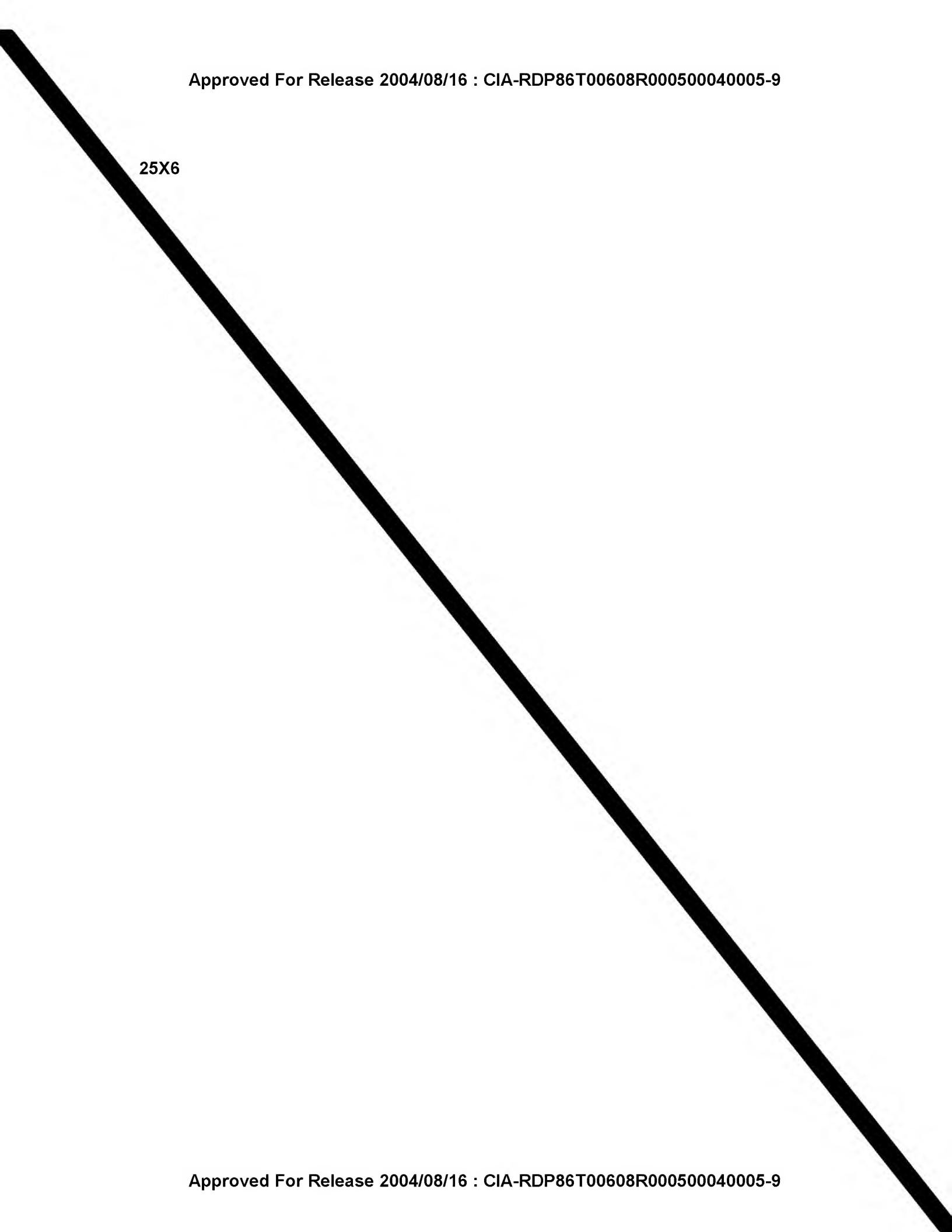
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Spanish Prime Minister Professes Liberalization,
But Police Still Harsh

Prime Minister Carlos Arias continues to mix promises for the gradual introduction of new freedoms into Spanish society with stern warnings that his government will crush any attempts to disrupt public order.

In his first televised press conference on Wednesday night, Arias attempted to give the impression that his liberalization program is proceeding smoothly. He admitted that his labor minister had resigned but did not address the issue--a conflict within the cabinet over a right-to-strike law--which led to the resignation. Arias dismissed his rightist critics who have watered down his program as "pin pricks from a minority."

Despite this rhetoric, the actions of the government indicate that Arias is responding to pressure from the right. On the day of his interview, police dispersed student demonstrators in Madrid, Bilbao, and Barcelona who were protesting the closure of the University of Valladolid. On Thursday they broke up a sit-in at the Madrid cathedral by arresting about 300 students. This led to a protest by church authorities over the unauthorized entry into the cathedral by the police.

The government has also stepped up action against labor dissidents. Even white-collar demonstrators have been arrested, and there are indications that the government will bring to trial a number of labor leaders charged with subversion. The police have also moved to cancel a number of public meetings--even those having prior approval--if they suspect they may become politically disturbing.

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[Redacted]

Authorities have also been cracking down on the press. Several publications have been censored and a number of journalists arrested or fired from official posts for their candid coverage of strikes or criticism of the government.

In his press conference, Arias said the government would vigorously attack subversion but support legally acceptable protests. By its action, however, the government is clearly having difficulty distinguishing between legitimate, peaceful dissent and subversion. [Redacted]

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Anti-Spanish Acts in Portugal Disturb Bilateral Relations

An anti-Spanish demonstration planned in Lisbon for March 3 is likely to place a further strain on relations between Spain and Portugal. The demonstration is being organized to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of the Catalan anarchist Puig Antich, who was executed by the Spanish government for the murder of a policeman in Barcelona.

This event follows a series of anti-Spanish acts in Portugal which the Spanish press has played up. The first known formal protest that Madrid has lodged with the new Portuguese government since its formation last April was publicized this week. According to the press, the Spanish embassy in Lisbon protested what it described as the assassination in Portugal of a Spanish citizen who was the local representative of the Spanish state petroleum organization. The Portuguese embassy in Madrid has denied that there are any political overtones to this incident.

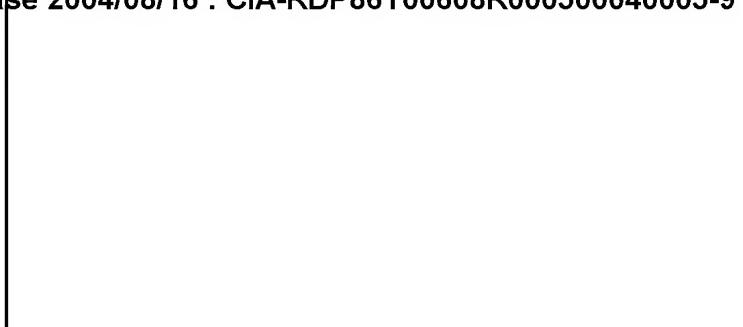
On the same day, the Spanish press reported the forcible detention in a Lisbon hotel of a Spanish industrialist and a US citizen who have been denied permission to leave Portugal. According to the press, the two are directors of a Spanish company with operations in Portugal. They are reportedly being held, pending a resolution of Portuguese workers' complaints over the company's dismissal of local employees.

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Belgian Government Faces Economic and Political Woes

The Tindemans coalition government is under increasing strain from rising unemployment and major demonstrations by workers in the economically-depressed region of Wallonia. Leaders of the trade unions and the coalition parties representing Wallonia have told the government that further economic deterioration will cost it substantial support.

Unemployment has risen to nearly six percent and has generated unusual unrest. Two large demonstrations were held last week in Liege and Charleroi where leaders of the Socialist and Christian trade unions demanded government action. Among those present were the leaders of the Social Christian Party and the Walloon Rally, the two Francophone groups on which Prime Minister Tindemans depends for an absolute majority in parliament.

The Walloon Rally leaders are particularly disturbed that the Tindemans government has not moved quickly to regionalize the federal budget and develop a program to revive Wallonia's depressed industries. The delay stems from the government's reluctance to make hard decisions about the allocation of budget funds between Wallonia and Flanders.

The influence wielded by Flemish politicians in the Tindemans coalition adds to the pressure on those who want to make a determined effort to bring economic relief to Wallonia. These tensions do not pose an immediate threat to the government, but Tindeman probably faces a difficult period in which criticism of his performance will mount.

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The opposition Socialists, for example, are protesting government policies by refusing to participate in any of the regional councils on cultural and economic affairs. Socialist leaders have also called for a national protest meeting on March 15 in Brussels where the party plans to form a shadow cabinet. [redacted]

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Autonomists in Azores Boycotting Governors'
Summit

Bona fide autonomists in the Azores are planning to boycott a summit meeting on local autonomy with governors of the three Azores districts scheduled for March 1 and 2. The meeting, rather than encouraging increased autonomy, may actually be an effort by Lisbon-directed leftists to scuttle local autonomy efforts. In the process, a moderate left opposition group, the Popular Democratic Party, could find its standing among the local populace damaged.

Little is known at present about the proposed meeting, except that it is to discuss a document on local autonomy prepared by a commission which included Ponta Delgada civil governor Antonio Borges Coutinho and other top district officers. Regional political parties and the Movement for Self-Determination of the Azorean People, MAPA, were invited to participate, but MAPA and the Azores branch of the moderate left-of-center Popular Democratic Party have refused.

MAPA represents the commercial class in the Azores and has championed the cause of "ample autonomy" because of fears of the spread of communism from the mainland. The Popular Democratic Party of the Azores has aligned itself with MAPA's autonomy aims, which are extremely popular among more prosperous and educated Azoreans--those most likely to vote in any election. This issue could enable the Popular Democrats to win most of the five district seats in the Portuguese constituent assembly elections scheduled for April.

The Azorean left, led by Ponta Delgada's Portuguese Democratic Movement--a Portuguese Communist Party front organization--has been quick to

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perceive the thrust of these activities and has launched its own counteroffensive. Ponta Delgada governor Coutinho, who is an MDP supporter, last October tried to persuade the district's three major political parties to condemn MAPA and call for its dissolution. The Popular Democrats' refusal to go along caused the plan to fail. Youths identified with the MDP broke into MAPA headquarters on New Year's Eve and, during a January visit to the Azores, Portuguese Army chief of staff and junta member General Carlos Fabiao attacked MAPA in the local press.

Without the endorsement of MAPA and the Popular Democrats, the present governors' meeting is unlikely to adopt any stand on autonomy which will receive popular support. The meeting could, however, attempt to stifle genuine expressions for autonomy and thus indirectly undercut the Popular Democrats' election program in the Azores.

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